CANADA URBAN INSTITUTE

Canada-Baltic Municipal Cooperation Program

Report on Public Involvement in the Development of the redevelopment of the Zirmunai (Lithuania) Residential Area

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Public Involvement In the Development of the Detailed Plan of Quarter D-10 of Zirmunai Residential Area and Implementation Report

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Contents

1. Introduction. Public participation in planning is a start to democratic planning in Lithuania

   - why plans should be discussed with the public
   - definition of the public
   - principles of public involvement in planning

2. Legal basis and procedures of involving the public in the planning process

   - legal documents for public involvement program for discussion of the detailed plan of residential quarter D-10
   - stages of public involvement

3. Process of public involvement in the development of the detailed plan of quarter D-10 of Zirmunai residential area.

   - main data on the quarter - existing situation
   - description of the process

I. Introduction.

Public participation in planning is a start to democratic planning in Lithuania

This report describes one of the first attempts in Lithuania to involve the public in the development of detailed plans. Since technical report on public involvement was prepared separately, the present report focuses on general theoretical aspects of public involvement in detailed plan development, psychological aspects, reactions of residents to the proposed process of the detailed plan development.

In developing principles of democratic planning, public involvement in planning development should become part and parcel of the planning process. At the moment the idea of public involvement is not sufficiently supported either by Lithuanian planners or investors. The process is viewed as a redundant hurdle increasing labour costs of planners and designers, project costs and postponing deadlines for approval. These negative aspects of public involvement in the planning process are most visible, whereas the positive effect of the public involvement is only felt later. Therefore, it is only natural that this innovation arouses dissatisfaction and uncertainty among specialists: why plans should be discussed with the public?

Why plans should be discussed with the public?

Long-term public involvement experience in countries with older traditions of democratic planning than in Lithuania has shown a number of advantages of such a presumable "cumbersome" planning process. Here are a few of them:

- Public involvement in physical planning allows to develop plans, implementation of which is a concern of the public.
- City physical plans become understandable to the public. They lose the image of restrictions and prohibitions.
- Better utilisation of scarce local resources is ensured.
- Support of local people is gained in taking decisions concerning implementation of plans.
- Realistic information about the planned territory is obtained.

As we can see the enumerated aspects of public involvement are positive in both political and economic sense.

Politically it is always useful to discuss the issue with all stakeholders before taking a decision. People would forgive many mistakes if they see sincere intents. If proposals are at least reviewed, people would feel that their opinion is taken into consideration. Public involvement process ensures means of identification of public interests, needs and values before the decision is taken so that the public could influence the decision making process.

A well-thought-over process in the preparation for a public involvement program facilitates identification of project goals and requirements, thus, accelerating the final decision. A still greater benefit is that public response may demand to rethink some of the decision assumptions.

Economically public involvement is effective as it **lowers project costs and time spent.** A common notion is that public involvement program would increase project

costs and time, lost in postponement. In fact, early public involvement may decrease postponements and expenses related to discussions of the public. In a short term public involvement causes increases in time and costs in coming to a decision. However, a decision that is expensive and takes long time can be efficient if it leads to implementation. A quick and cheap decision may turn to be high cost if it does not help in the case of conflicts of the parties.

Public involvement is not a tool that would eliminate all disputes. However, with public involvement the number of disputes may decrease. It is also a method of involving a "new" social partner - the public - into decision making process.

As mentioned earlier, this process is not sufficiently supported in Lithuania, and this is quite understandable. As far as experience in other countries shows, public involvement is the more effective the more the public itself is conscious. Values of democracy are not strong in Lithuania. People often lack simple tolerance in exchanging their views and looking for compromise, they lack consciousness and responsibility to think of their needs in a wider context of community. Residents often lack knowledge to take most simple decisions regarding their property. This is an obstacle to public involvement in the planning process. Due to reasons of poor communication culture of our citizens, low level of legal knowledge, at the moment stakeholder involvement takes higher labour costs while giving less effect. Western experience shows that this process has a great potential, and it should without doubt be continued.

In the case described further, necessity of public involvement was determined not only by the advantages of the process. The situation of the residential quarter D-10 of Zirmunai is complicated as the confrontation of residents and investors reached the highest degree - due to hazy quarter development policy that was not discussed with the resident, private capital suffered losses, building constructions were discontinued. In this case public involvement process, just as, by the way, development of the very plan, became inevitable. These predetermined conditions were very unfavourable to the plan discussion with the public, because, as far as experience shows, it much easier to prevent conflicts than solve them. A more effective way is to prevent conflicts from happening at all, because in such a case we have to deal with "patching up holes" rather than a rational city governance policy.

Definition of the public

There people, not just "the public". In the case of public involvement in discussion of the detailed plan of residential quarter D-10, this definition was especially appropriate, because due to the old conflict people were very irritated and emotional. As a result at the beginning every participant just try to reproach local authorities, investors - "Mafia"-, the state or simply hard living conditions. During discussions a number of conflicting views emerged where claims or demands of one resident directly contradicted requests of another resident. This showed that residents were unanimous only in one respects - in their hostility. Everyone came to organised meetings with their own conflict, therefore, meeting facilitators tried to direct discussion to problems of single residents rather than claims of groups of people, since there practically was no organised representation.

Definition of the public is necessary in the process of public participation in order to ensure that each person or group participates in the process of development of the detailed plan which may at least theoretically touch their interests.

At the very beginning of program development all community groups were identified. Definition of the public is basis for the planning of the whole process, for the structure of the process.

In the case of residential quarter D-10, community consists of the following groups:

1. Residents of wooden houses
2. Residents of multi-storey buildings
3. Owners of land plots
4. Representative of quarter's voters - Seimas deputy V.Andriukaitis
5. Representative of Zirmunai ward
6. Representative of quarter's secondary school

Principles of public involvement in planning

In plan discussions, the public has to be ensured the following rights:

- the right to know;
- the right to be heard;
- the right to influence decisions;

In our case the rights were guaranteed by the following means:

The right to know:

- goals of the detailed plan were announced publicly
- means of public involvement, procedures of intermediary decision making, and involvement possibilities are announced publicly
- detailed plan draft exhibitions and meetings are arranged

The right to be heard:

- special time and place are allotted to submit proposals, comments and claims concerning the detailed plan (exhibitions and two meetings)

The right to influence decisions:

- proposals, comments and claims of the public for corrections in the draft detailed plan are taken into consideration
- special documents are prepared where proposals, comments and claims of the public are analysed and summarised
- representatives of the public are presented with possibilities to appeal against decisions within 4 weeks in accordance with the procedure established by State inspection of supervision of physical planning laws.

II. Legal basis and procedures of involving the public in the planning process

Public involvement program for discussion of the detailed plan of residential quarter D-10 was developed based on the following legal documents:

1. Physical Planning Law of the Republic of Lithuania, Part 2, chapter 3 "Detailed Planning" and part 3 "Publicity of the Physical Planning".
2. Design activities program developed by Department of Architecture and Building of the City of Vilnius in 1996, approved in the City Development Committee 1996.02.13
3. Design program approved by the Head of Department of Architecture and Building of the City of Vilnius 1995.12.07

Stages of public involvement

	Stages and procedures 1996	March				April				May					June				July				August				
	weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5
I.	Consultations about rehabilitation project																										
1.	Description of residents interests groups, opinion survey. Prognosis of consequences.																										
II	PUBLIC DISCUSSION																										
1.	Announcement in Media about public participation, direct information to residents.																										
2.	Knowledge of the project in planning company.																										
3.	Open exhibition of the project in city ward.																										
4.	Discussion of the planning suggestions																										
5.	Public meeting																										
6.	File a claim with State inspection of supervision of physical planning (4 weeks)																										
7.	Project approval in City Council (3 weeks)																										

III. Process of public involvement in the development of the detailed plan of quarter D-10 of Zirmunai residential area

Main data on the quarter - existing situation

I. TERRITORY LOCATION: Territory of Zirmunai ward between Tuskulenu, Zirmunu and Minties streets.

II. TERRITORY AREA: 51.9 ha

III. POPULATION: 11 600 people.

Resident associations: 19

IV. NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS: 4660
of them:

- in multi-storey buildings - 4610
- single storey houses - 50

V. HOUSING SPACE: 266.8 thousand. sq. m

VI. Existing offices, service companies, facilities:

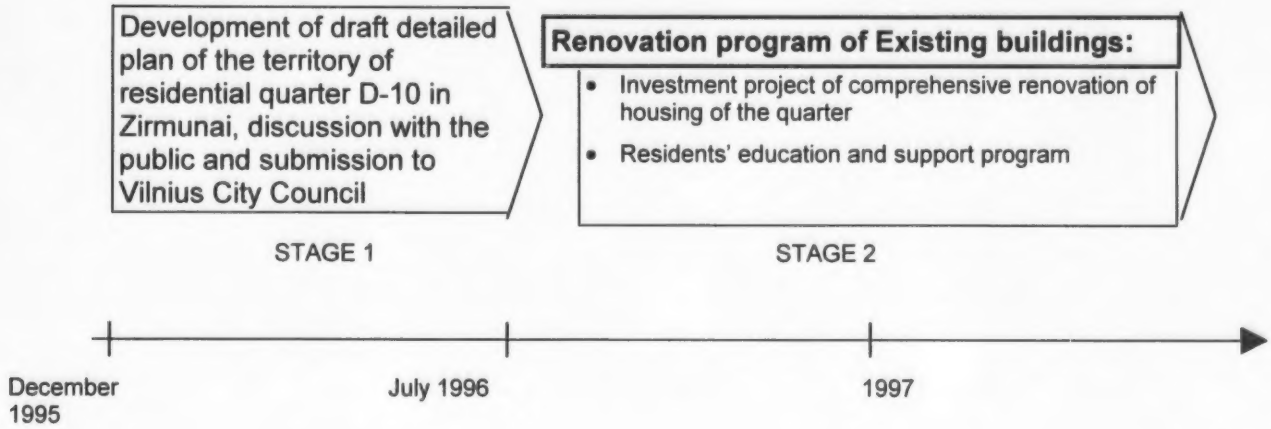
- two schools (~1712 + 410 pupils)
- Lithuanian Savings Bank
- shops "Namø remontas", "Birute", shopping centre "Minskas"
- library
- self-service laundrette
- bakery, bread shop
- garages - 6+23 garages, excluding garages of temporary type
- playgrounds
- sports fields

General Stages of Implementation of The Detailed Plan:

Stage 1. Development of draft detailed plan of the territory of residential quarter D-10 in Zirmunai, discussion with the public and submission to Vilnius City Council.

Stage 2. Renovation program of Existing buildings:

A. investment project of comprehensive renovation of housing of the quarter
B. residents' education and support program


Development of draft detailed plan of the territory of residential quarter D-10 in Zirmunai, discussion with the public and submission to Vilnius City Council
Renovation program of Existing buildings:
• Investment project of comprehensive renovation of housing of the quarter
• Residents' education and support program
STAGE 1
STAGE 2
December 1995
July 1996
1997

Stage 1.

Goals of the Detailed Plan

Built in 1965-70 and having long been a prestigious area, the quarter is now worn out both physically and morally. In the opinion of urban planners, the main flaw of the quarter is 30 plots with wooden houses, the surroundings of which are not sufficiently maintained and the very houses are not intended to be improved. In accordance with the general program of city densification, Department of Architecture and Building developed a project for the renovation of this quarter.

Nearly a year ago building construction was started in a few vacant plots among high-rise buildings. Residents were not informed of this. As a result there was a spontaneous resistance reaction, and building constructions were blockaded. However, these actions were not properly prepared, they took place without rules, eclectically. Speeches were very emotional, one-way, there was no communication or negotiation whatsoever.

MAIN GOAL OF THE DETAILED PLAN:

- **to revive a worn out city territory, its infrastructure, to give it a modern aesthetic look, to improve life quality and the image of the quarter.**
- to set the ratio of the private and state land and land use
- to provide for sites for garage construction
- to repair quarter's inside streets, pavements and pedestrian and cyclist paths
- to renovate engineering network
- to seek improvement of housing and environment standards - to set foundation for the next - renovation - stage

Planning and methodology of the public involvement process

Before starting the implementation of the program of public involvement in discussion of the detailed plan, the plan organiser Department of Architecture and Building together with experts of the Canadian urban Institute arranged a series of working meetings for discussion of the future public involvement program. During these meetings the most appropriate ways of presentation of the plan to the public, order of arranging meetings were discussed, and opinions of planners were analysed. These meetings attended by representatives of the Ministry of Building and Urban Development, city wards and homeowners associations, apart from personnel of the Department of Architecture and Building and plan authors. Attempts were made to forecast what reactions the proposed plan will receive, which elements of the plan or its presentation should be adjusted. All in all there were 4 working meetings.

Schedule of public involvement in the discussion of the detailed plan is presented below.

Informing the public

One of the main requirements for any kind of public involvement project is to appropriately inform the residents. If people are not sufficiently clearly informed about the planned public involvement means, possibilities to participate in the

planning process or this information is presented in a hazy, too complex manner (technocratically), all the process becomes just a formality.

Residents of quarter D-10 were informed of the process of public involvement in the development of the detailed plan according to the program scheduled in advance:

1. 6 announcements on Vilnius Wire Radio and radio station Hansa
2. 2 articles in the supplement Sostine of daily Lietuvos Rytas
3. Advertisements before every meeting in the ward of Zirmunai in the territory of the quarter (around 100 pieces)
4. Informing by mail. Residents of wooden houses were mailed twice according to the list (around 50 pieces). Official notifications of the public meeting were mailed to these quarter residents in land plots of which building regulations or restrictions apply.

Informing the public was made more difficult by the fact that information leaflets were quite quickly ripped off in the quarter territory and destroyed. Informing via mass media is not effective as to the majority of people these means are simply inaccessible.

In the future informing by mailing should be applied more. With availability of reliable address data base, this way is probably the most effective. There is no necessity to mail each resident, mailing chairs of associations or certain residents with request to spread information to neighbours could be enough.

Description of the process

Events that have already taken place:

- 4 working meetings: preparation for meetings with residents and for the public exhibition;
- meeting with residents on May 7;
- meeting with residents on May 14;
- public exhibition of the project on May 7-21;
- public meeting on August 13.

Attendance of the meeting that took place on May 7 and 14 in the school in the quarter territory was rather high (the 1st meeting was attended by around 60 people, and the 2nd - by 55 people).

The majority of participants represented residents of wooden houses. Position of this part of residents was rather unanimous and categorical during the first meeting: "Project plans to tear down our houses and build new ones, we will not let this happen". This preconceived opinion of residents impaired constructive discussion, because residents were simply letting out their anger, in their speeches they emphasised problems determined by a general economic social situation in the country, and not by the project under discussion.

Opinions expressed during the first meeting were successfully summarised by Seimas deputy V.Andriukaitis, representing interests of the residents of this quarter. This conclusion became a firm foundation for the second meeting.

The second meeting was significantly more constructive, and after different technical aspects of the quarter revival project were discussed, residents (again, mainly residents of wooden houses) grouped around the project together with project authors, representatives of the Department of Architecture and Building and started to discuss practical aspects of project implementation that were personally relevant to these residents: "will it be possible to sell plots, who is going to buy, what will be possible to build, and the like". Discussions with residents of wooden houses showed that the majority do not know how to manage their property, which variants are optimum. People do not know their rights, therefore, they are likely to take decisions spontaneously, guided by hear-say, advise of dubious value from their acquaintances.

During the presentation it became apparent that there are two interest groups: residents of wooden houses and multi-storey buildings. The former, without doubt, is most interested in possibilities to sell or rearrange plots, whereas in residents of multi-storey buildings are most worried about new constructions in the quarter.

According to intents concerning their land plots, residents of wooden houses may be subdivided into the following three groups:

1. Having funds to manage their property on their own (may sell, or may mange themselves);

2. Wishing an equivalent or better housing with all amenities for their plot;

3. Refusing to move out because they could not afford paying for amenities in the new place of residence.

Proportions of these groups are not clear, and they can shift significantly depending on actions of investors and the municipality.

Residents of multi-storey buildings have opposite interests. They most often made comments concerning buildings proposed to be built in the neighbourhood of their building. Their dissatisfaction is mainly caused by proposals to build garages. Reaction of this part of residents is natural and understandable: no one wants the view out of their window to be blocked by the garage which will be used by residents of the whole quarter. It is very hard to find even financial motives for residents of multi-storey buildings to approve of such facilities. On the other hand, during both meetings it was residents of multi-storey buildings that complained of the bad situation in their yards blocked by cars.

In general, residents having participated in project discussion were against the proposed project. Both at the meetings and when answering the questionnaire distributed during the meetings (filled out only by 14 residents) around 95% said they disagree with the submitted project draft. This opinion was most often by a commentary "because we do not want to move out" of residents of wooden houses. This once again proves that residents do not get right the essence of the project,

they think that according to the old planning traditions they will simply be moved out, and their recently privatised land will be taken away.

In conclusion, we can present the main results of the two meetings:

1. Planners received 28 planning proposals as a result of which essential changes were made in the detailed plan draft. The most significant lesson for the future is: do not draw houses on private property, but rather suggest land use and building regulations.

2. Despite hostile attitude of residents concerning the plan, it was achieved that residents submitted planning proposals according to the established procedure, i.e. according to the procedures of public involvement in plan development set in advance, provided for in the Law of Physical Planning of the Republic of Lithuania. A similar attempt failed in the meetings with residents half a year ago.

3. Participants of the meetings unanimously agreed that public involvement is necessary.

This report will be continued